

# The Berean.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

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[Vol. I.]

## CRUCIFIXION.

Lord, I would stand with thoughtful eye  
Beneath the fatal tree,  
And see thee bleed, and see thee die,  
And think, "what love to me!"

Dwell on the sight, my stony heart,  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
And hate the thought of sin.

Didst thou for me, my Saviour, bravo  
The scold, the scourge, the gall,  
The nails, the thorns, the spear, the grave,  
While I deserved them all?

O help me some return to make,  
To yield my heart to thee,  
And do not suffer for thy sake  
As thou didst then for me!

REV. H. F. LYTT.

## THE DIVINE TEACHING WHICH GOD HAS PROMISED.

From Bickersteth's Christian Student.

CONTINUED.

The infinite goodness of God in vouchsafing such a teacher, will be the more clearly seen when we remember that spiritual blindness is not merely a misfortune, it is a fault, it is seriously criminal. It is not owing to want of ability, for the most wise of this world are often spiritually foolish. It is not owing to want of instruction, for such as Judas had the best instruction, but it is the perverseness of the heart, rejecting the divinely revealed descriptions of the infinitely glorious God, hating his holy character, and preferring, from the love of sin, its own carnal conceptions, and principles. Spiritual blindness alleges, as an excuse for our sin, the fact that we have no disposition to love God, when it is in truth the extreme aggravation of our sin. Not love Him who is infinitely amiable and lovely! how criminal the heart which is destitute of this love! how yet more criminal he who justifies himself in sin, from the want of such love! yet this is our state by nature. And towards such hostile minds, God has shewn the richest mercy; he commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

This divine teaching is quite distinct from, and superior to a knowledge of the doctrines and system of Christianity. Spiritual ignorance is very consistent with doctrinal knowledge. Satan has doctrinal knowledge, but he has no true apprehension of the divine glory, no reliance for the divine beauty. He hates that which is good, because his own works are evil. We want an internal, spiritual sense, the gift of God, to discover to us the excellence of the divine nature.

Mr. Law puts this in a strong light when he remarks: "The empty letter-learned knowledge which the natural man can as easily have of the sacred Scriptures and religious matters, as of any other books or human affairs, being taken for divine knowledge, has spread such darkness and delusion all over Christendom, as may be reckoned no less than a general apostasy from the Gospel state of divine illumination. The best ability of the natural man can go no farther than talk, and notions of opinions about Scripture words and facts: on these he may be a great critic, an acute logician, a powerful orator, and know every thing of the Scripture except the spirit and the truth." A man is not therefore the better able to receive and comprehend the great essential truths of Christianity in their real influence, because he is a great critic, or a great scholar. No illiterate man has farther wandered from the truth than have some great scholars. Divine illumination gives us to know truth in its holy influence, and in its real experience and enjoyment.

Wisdom happily distinguishes the acquisitions of human intellect, and those arising from divine teaching: showing the infinite superiority of the latter, he says, "one who is a scholar of this heavenly academy, not only knows and believes, but has a sensible perception of what is remission of sins, and the privilege of adoption, and familiar communion with God, and the grace of the Spirit inhabiting the breast, and the love of God poured out in the heart, and the hidden manna, and the sweet love of Christ, and the earnest and pledge of perfect felicity."

We depreciate not talent, and genius, and human industry, and learning, and accurate, elaborate and comprehensive human knowledge. These have their office, and under divine grace they are of eminent and extensive use in the fulfilment of that office, but let them not usurp a prerogative which is not theirs, that of obtaining for, or communicating to the soul, the spiritual judgment and experience by which we discern the things of the Spirit of God. Here, he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 1 Cor. ii. 15.

It is not sufficient to object, "the most acute reasoning has been urged in depreciation of reason; the advocate of special inspiration declaims against the presumption of human reasoning: this may be perfectly true, and yet reason be wholly incompetent fully to discern spiritual things. Nay, let us take care lest we object to the blessed apostle, who exercised the highest powers of reasoning in his epistles, and yet asserts, if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. The teaching of the Holy Spirit does not take away or weaken our reasoning powers; it rather improves them to the utmost, but it puts them in their proper place in due subordination to higher powers, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The whole question is, "what do the Scriptures testify?"

Perhaps the grand defect of most theo-

logical writers is the not constantly advertising to the need of divine teaching, to make us wise unto salvation; and the great success of such spiritual and devotional treatises as have been a means of edifying the church through successive ages, has arisen from their clearly and distinctly bringing forward our dependence on divine grace. Such books as Augustine's Confessions, and Thomas à Kempis, are eminently useful simply on this ground.

THE MODE OF DIVINE TEACHING calls for attention. There are particulars on this point, which, like the winds of the heavens, are beyond human investigation (John iii. 8.); but there are other particulars of great practical moment for our instruction and edification. God does not now teach by supernatural means, as he taught the prophets and apostles, and enabled them to write the inspired volume. He does not ordinarily teach without human instrumentality, and, specially he teaches through his own word and his own Spirit. The standard or criterion of this instruction, is the inspired volume. All claim to it, contrary to, or beyond the written word, and not under the sanction and regulation of that word, is a dangerous delusion. The Saviour is the great Mediator, by whom this blessing comes.

The Father, through the mediation of Christ, communicates, by the Spirit, this divine teaching to his children. The Holy Ghost is the main agent. The Divine Spirit enables us to know the things that are freely given us of God (1 Cor. ii. 12.) The Lord promises the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things (John xiv. 26.) Of this, St. John, speaking to Christians in general, says, "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you. He dispels prejudices. He preserves from dangerous error, He guides unto all necessary truth, He makes our study itself devotional, humble, and practical. He removes the averseness of the affections, and He turns the will to God. He especially reveals to the inward man the grace and glory of the Saviour. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Bishop Jewell in his defence of his apology, well observes, "As the Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, so must they be expounded by the same, for without the Spirit we have neither ears to hear, nor eyes to see. It is the Spirit that opens, and no man shuts; the same shuts, and no man opens. The same Spirit prepared and opened the woman's heart, that she should give ear to and consider the things that were spoken by Paul; and in respect of the Spirit, the prophet Isaiah says, "they shall be all taught of God."

So Luther, in a letter to Spalatinus, after recommending to his notice certain parts of the writings of Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, exhorts him always to begin his studies with serious prayer; stating that, "there is really no interpreter of the divine word but its own Author."

Divine teaching is manifested and evidenced by three principal features—the discovery of our sinfulness, the leading us to rest in Christ as our only righteousness before God, and the victory over the temptations of our spiritual enemy. Our Lord dwells particularly on these operations of the Spirit. John xvi. 7—15.

A decisive evidence of divine illumination is love to the law of God, (see Psalm cxix. throughout) and obedience to the divine commands. Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commands. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. All religious confidence, consistent with the habitual indulgence of unholiness, evil words, or a sinful life, is a mere pretence, directly opposed both to the very nature of the Gospel, the whole current of Scripture, and the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit thus gives Christians an illumination far beyond mere head-knowledge; the light is more clear and vivid, the enjoyment is more experimental, the sense of personal interest is far stronger, and the influence to practical obedience is far more efficacious.

It is freely allowed, that there have been those who have greatly abused this doctrine, and made it an occasion of self-complacency, contempt of others, and reproaches against them. They could not give a more striking evidence of their own want of that, in the fancied possession of which they boast. How discriminating are St. James's words on this head; after bidding the truly wise man to show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom; and after speaking of such wisdom as is earthly, sensual, and devilish, he thus describes that which God gives—the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

The author has the more insisted on this subject on its having been much disregarded. We plead not for any supernatural apostolic inspiration; we plead not for any who claim infallibility, whether Papist or Protestant, but we do plead against the idea that reason and learning can of themselves guide us to the full meaning of Scripture. We do plead against a mere general admission, that our endeavours are fruitless without the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, while the tendency of the observations is to show that reason and learning are every thing. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is of main and vital importance, and should therefore be prominently urged, and not casually admitted.

To be concluded in our next.

## MEDITATION FOR LENT.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

What an abhorrence of sin should this spectacle beget in us! Picture to yourselves the course and progress of our Saviour's afflictions, from the garden of his agony to the mountain of his crucifixion. Track his bloody steps from Gethsemane to the palace of the high Priest, and thence to the judgment-hall of Pilate, and at last to Golgotha. See him trodden in the winepress of divine indignation, till the blood oozed from every pore of his sacred body. See him blindfolded, buffeted, spit upon, torn with whips, and crowned with thorns. See his hands and feet mangled with nails, and his side pierced with a spear. When he groans, see him answered with scoffs and insults; and when he thirsts, see him presented with gall and vinegar: and hear that doleful cry, which could only burst from a breaking heart; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." Having contemplated all these sights, and listened to these sounds of woe, then remember, poor sinner, that this was all endured on thy account—that that it was sin, even thy sin, which crucified the Lord of glory. Recollect that this man of sorrows, this prince of sufferers, was wounded for thy transgressions, and bruised for thine iniquities. It was because thou hadst broken the law, that he was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." That cup of bitterness which he emptied, was the cup of God's vengeance for thine offences. Then never more think lightly of sin, confess it to be a hateful and abominable evil. If God abhorred it so much, as not to spare his own Son, when found in the place of sinners, do you also loathe and detest it. And with heart and soul importune the great Dispenser of the Spirit, to quell the power of sin, and utterly to extinguish the love of it in your bosoms.

What a spring of consolation is the cross of Jesus to repentant sinners! It is that tree which, on being cast into the bitterest waters, makes them sweet. Thou broken-hearted penitent, canst thou distrust the promises of the Gospel, when thou seest the strong foundation on which they stand? It is the blood of God's only begotten Son which paid for thy forgiveness, and how canst thou doubt of being forgiven? What! wilt thou think meanly of the mercy of God, after the earnest he hath given of it in sending down his beloved Son to die for thy redemption? Can that love ever fail, which began with such a deed? Will he who ordained the sacrifice refuse to accept it? Or is there in thy iniquities more power to defile, than there is virtue to purge them away in the blood of atonement? O hear that blood, for it yet speaketh as loudly and sweetly as when first it trickled down the cross; and it will silence the voice of the offended law, and of thine accusing conscience. It assures thee that it cleanseth from all sin. It bids thee take courage, for God is reconciled, and hath cast all thy sins behind his back. It declares that the Father and his Son are never more glorified, than when the cross becomes an instrument of salvation to the chief of sinners. It enables thee to enter the holy of holies; to behold the glory upon the mercy-seat; to feel thine adoption as a child; and boldly to call, "Abba, Father." For it utters those delightful words, which an inspired apostle hath recorded; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Can any thing pour greater contempt on the pleasures and vanities of the world, than Christ, the Son of God, upon the cross? If the Maker of the worlds was the poorest and lowliest of men, and chose a life of labour, contempt, and persecution; if he had a manger for his cradle—a carpenter for his reputed father,—fishermen and publicans for his companions,—the bare ground for his couch,—hunger, thirst, and weariness for his daily entertainment,—thorns for his crown,—a reed for his sceptre,—chains and nails for his royal jewels,—and a cross for his deathbed;—if this, my brethren, be a faithful representation of the Son of God upon the earth, is it for us to be greedy of pomp and splendour, of softness and delicacies, and to murmur at the want, or loss, of domestic ease and comfort? Do we call ourselves the followers of him, whose titles (as imposed by the children of darkness,) were demone and wine-bibber; and cannot we brook a word of insult, or even a scornful look? Nay, let us gaze upon the cross, till we ourselves are crucified with Christ in heart and affection:—till the grandeur and beauties of the world have faded from our sight:—till we are grown willing to bear all hardness, like worthy soldiers of the Captain of our salvation;—and till we are filled with that spirit which "counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Lastly; let this day's meditation upon the Lamb slain for sinners, excite you to all gratitude and obedience. If such motives fail as have now been urged upon you, I despair of moving you by any other. O dwell upon them, till the love of God and Jesus Christ are shed abroad in your hearts. Can you grudge any service to the Father, who withheld not his only Son, but made him a curse in your behalf? Can you refuse obedience to the Son, who for your sakes became obedient unto death, even the accursed death of the cross? What labour can you reckon hard, what sacrifice costly, when put in the scale against your debt for such astonishing benefits? Then take upon you the yoke and burden of your God and Saviour. Your love to him will make them easy and pleasant at the first; and you will afterwards find them more and more delightful to you, from their excellent effects. Oh, what makes us hesitate for a moment to exchange the hateful bondage of the world and the flesh, for the

glorious liberty which Christ bestows on all who love his service? Let us go to him, brethren, and say in the spirit of the Israelites to Gideon, "Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us from the hand of our enemies." To thee we surrender ourselves, for we are thy purchase. We bind ourselves to thy cross, as a sacrifice "to the horns of the altar." Thou hast joined us to thyself in an everlasting covenant: and we desire henceforward to have no will but thine; to walk worthy of thy Gospel, and to copy thy example; that after glorifying thee now in our body and in our spirit, we may in due time be perfected with thee in the glory of the Father.

Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—Rev. J. N. Pearson.

## A PLACE FOR YOU.

JOHN XIV. 2.

And who, my Christian brethren, are the individuals thus distinguished by their Lord? Let the man of the world reply, and he may be disposed to say, "For the high or the learned, for the poet, or the orator, or the conqueror of hostile millions;" for it is at their feet that the world ordinarily casts her honours. Nor would the reply in every instance be inaccurate. In not a few cases, rank, and learning, and genius, are "justified of their children," and the highest in earthly distinctions are the highest in the favour of God. But how frequent are the exceptions! In how many instances are we almost constrained to forebode that the scriptural denunciation will be fulfilled, and the "first will be last?" Many, it is to be feared, who have been flattered when living, and whose poor remains, proudly decorated with the sad memorials of the mutability of all human things, have been followed by sorrowing thousands to the grave, will, because impenitent and unholily, sink from the high seats of worldly distinction to the deep and dreadful dungeon of eternal infamy and wretchedness. It is not difficult to fancy such an individual, the palm of earthly honour in his hand, and its laurels wrapped around his brow, passing from the silent tomb to the bar of everlasting judgment, and there claiming for himself, among the spirits of the blessed, as by a sort of natural right, the distinctions so long freely conceded to him on earth. But, alas! how awful the reverse! Follow that haughty spirit a step farther in his eternal career. Behold the judgment set and the books opened, the witnesses assembled, and the Ancient of days enthroned amidst all the glories of the Godhead, to fix the everlasting destinies of his creatures. I hear the trumpet of the archangel, and the sentence of the Lord against the impenitent, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

But where, during this awful transaction, during the solemn silence and the general "hush of feeling" which may be conceived to succeed it; where is the despised individual on whom the flattered, but criminal great perhaps trampled in his path to victory and renown? If he was a believer in Christ; if he was the lowly, simple, affectionate, obedient disciple of the cross; if, from his pallet of straw, he was accustomed to lift the prayer of faith and love to the throne of compassion: his trials and his sorrows are over; he is accepted in the Beloved; he takes his place amidst the dominions and principalities of heaven; he drinks of the living fountains of water, and triumphs in the presence of God through all eternity. Even upon earth the voice of the Redeemer had often gently whispered to his aching heart, "I go to prepare a place for you;" and now he actually sees that place, and the gracious Master who prepared it, and enters for ever into the joy of his Lord.

In how important a point of view, my Christian brethren, do considerations such as these place the principles and duties of religion! "I die daily," is the language of St. Paul. And the real wisdom of every man is, in thought, to die every hour; to bring death close to him; to look through the flimsy partition which separates him from the world to come; to rehearse, in the chambers of the mind, the judgment of the great day; to look anxiously to his state of preparation, to the foundation of his hopes, and to the security of his happiness. God grant, that when the cry of the last Advent is heard, and when the very dead shall start from their graves, all to whom I am speaking may, in the confidence of holy trust in the merits and compassion of a Saviour, be enabled to "lift up their heads with joy;" because their "redemption draweth nigh!"—Rev. J. W. Cunningham, of Harrow.

## THE TEST OF PROFITABLE READING.

The Bible is a divine Encyclopedia in itself. It contains history, the most authentic and ancient, tracing back to the first creation of our world; and prophecy, the most important and interesting, tracing forward to its final consummation; journeys surpassing all others in the marvellousness of their adventures, and the dignity of their guide, for they were marked by miracles at every step, and in every movement directed by God; the travels of the most distinguished missionaries, the first preachers of the Gospel; and the lives of the most illustrious personages, including the biography of the Son of God; events more wonderful than romance ever imagined; and stories, more fascinating than fancy ever sketched; the finest specimens of poetry and eloquence, of sound philosophy, and solid argument; models of virtue, the most attractive; and maxims of wisdom, the most profound; forms of prayer, the most appro-

prate in every variety of spiritual experience; and songs of praise, that would not be unworthy of an angel's tongue—precepts of unparalleled importance; and parables of unrivalled beauty; examples of consistent piety, suited to every situation; and lessons of divine instruction, adapted to every age!

But, above all, this blessed Book deserves and demands your persevering and prayerful study, because it reveals the only way of salvation, by testifying of Him, who is the only Saviour—who is Himself, "the way, the truth, and the life!" the Alpha and Omega of a sinner's hopes—the sum and substance of a sinner's salvation! This is the only book, in which you are certain of finding truth without any mixture of error—the only one, which you are sure that the Holy Spirit has indited by His infallible inspiration, and whose devout perusal, engaged in with prayer for His divine teaching, He has promised and pledged Himself to bless! Beware, then, of substituting any style of religious reading, however excellent in itself, for the perusal of the Word of God! If you do so, that God, who is jealous of the honour of His own word, will withhold His blessing from the book, (were it even the most spiritual and heavenly-minded ever composed by uninspired man,) which is allowed to usurp, in your regard and study, the place which is exclusively the prerogative of the oracles of divine truth! The consequence will be, that, however you may be amused, you will not be profited by such reading! Unaccompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, it will not communicate a single particle of spiritual strength or refreshment to your soul. The light that shines on the pages of the book, however brilliant, will not warm your heart with a Saviour's love! No dew of divine grace will distil from its leaves, however rich in piety or genius, to revive your drooping soul.

Try then, I would affectionately advise you, the effect of all your religious reading by the test I have proposed, what influence it appears to exercise over your relish for the reading of the Bible. If you find a decided increase in your taste for the study of this blessed Book—if you feel it to be more precious to your soul—that your desire for it is quickened, and your delight in it deepened; then may you hope, that a blessing is resting on whatever religious works you are studying, when they are thus regarded, and valued only as handmaids to the word of God. But if you find a contrary effect produced; that you take up the religious work, especially if it be a work of fiction, with desire, peruse it with delight, and lay it down with regret, while you commence the study of the Bible with reluctance, continue it with wearisomeness, and close it with a feeling of satisfaction, because the task, which conscience compelled you to undertake, is finished, then, be assured, your religious reading, however excellent in itself, or fascinating in its effects, is unattended with the blessing of God; or any profit to your own soul.—REV. HUGH WHITE.

## SCRIPTURAL EDUCATION.

We, the undersigned Incumbents and Curates of the diocese of Ardagh, feel ourselves called on, at this peculiar crisis, publicly to come forward and declare our unanimous sentiments on the subject of national education.

As ministers of the National and Established Church, we hold ourselves bound, according to our irrevocable ordination vows, to be ready always to instruct all to whom we can have access in the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testaments; and we can never enter into a compromise with either the Government, or any body constituted by it, which would have the effect of restraining us, at any time, or in any place, from the discharge of this our bounden duty both to God and man.

We would not force ourselves as teachers on any, nor would we be parties in compelling any to receive scriptural instruction, however sinfully we must consider them to act who reject it; neither would we encourage children to disobey their parents. But on the other hand, we can never formally or by implication recognise the right of parents over their children to make them disobey the express command of God (Deut. iv. 9, 10; vi. 7; and xi. 19); and we can never, in any way or degree, make ourselves partakers of the sin of those who will thus set their authority against the authority of the Great Father of us all.

We, at the same time, deny that the objection to scriptural education comes originally or really from the children's parents. The fact is too notorious to be disputed, that it is not the parent, but the priest, putting himself in loco parentis, that is the objector. We can declare that we have never known an instance, in our parishes, of children being withdrawn from our scriptural schools on this account, in which the active and annoying interference of the priest was not directly discernible as its sole cause, and the parents have rarely yielded until the extreme measure was adopted, or threatened, of publicly denouncing them in the chapel, or of refusing to them the rites of the Church.

The question here being the fundamental one which lies between the Roman and all the Reformed Churches, viz., shall the light of God's word be free and accessible to all God's creatures? it would plainly be most inconsistent in us, as Protestants and Protestant ministers, to identify ourselves with the Papal view of the question, and thus become the instruments of delivering over the children of the Roman Catholic population of Ireland bound, as it were, hand and foot, into the power of those whose interest it is to keep them in darkness.

We are accused of offering a factions opposition to Government; but this is as contrary to our inclinations as to our principles; and